

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN



MEDIA ADVISORY

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Contact: David Marin
(202) 225-5074

*Note to Photographers/Editors: The FARC Defector, Carlos Ploter,
Cannot be Videotaped or Photographed*

The War on Colombia's 'Drugs and Thugs' Will Be Focus of Government Reform Hearing

**What: Government Reform Committee oversight hearing:
"The War Against Drugs and Thugs: A Status Report on Plan Colombia Successes
and Remaining Challenges"**

When: THURSDAY, June 17, 2004, 2:00 p.m.

Where: ROOM 2154, RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

Background:

Since 1999, the Government of Columbia has enacted Plan Colombia, an integrated strategy designed to meet the most pressing challenges facing the country – promoting the peace process, combating narcoterrorism, reviving the economy and strengthening democracy. The United States strongly supports Plan Colombia by providing assistance to fight the illicit drug trade, fortify the rule of law, protect human rights, expand economic development, and foster peace.

Plan Colombia appears to be having some success, with significant decreases in drug crops, such as coca and opium poppy, better drug interdiction efforts, and decreases in kidnapping and violence.

Colombia is one of the oldest democracies in the Western Hemisphere. But it is also home to three terrorist groups who fund their guerilla activities with drugs smuggled

into the U.S. for American consumption. About 80 percent of cocaine entering the U.S. is produced in or passes through the country. Colombia is a significant source of heroin.

Because narcotics trafficking and the guerilla insurgency have become intertwined problems, the U.S. has exercised expanded authority, granted by Congress since 2002, for increased flexibility to use U.S. counterdrug funds for a unified campaign to fight narcoterrorism and minimize the flow of illicit drugs into the U.S. Congress passed legislation to provide a total of \$3.7 billion from FY2000-FY2004 to fund the State Department and Department of Defense's counternarcotics activities. President Bush has continued support for Plan Colombia by developing the Andean Counterdrug Initiative (ACI), which provides for the eradication of coca and opium poppy crops, the interdiction of narcotics trafficking, and the protection of infrastructure through training and material support for Colombia's security forces. ACI also supports alternative crop development and infrastructure development to give coca and opium poppy farmers alternative sources of income, and institution building to strengthen democracy.

After years of effort, the U.S. is beginning to see returns on the money, time, and resources invested in Colombia. Coca production is down by at least 20 percent since 2001 and opium poppy cultivation has decreased by 10 percent. The State Department expects that the Plan Colombia goal of having sprayed 50 percent of Colombia's coca crop by the end of 2006 may be accomplished this year. Interdiction efforts by the Government of Colombia have increased since 2002 with over 70 metric tons of cocaine seized in 2003. And the number of kidnappings, which is a major source of revenue for guerillas, decreased by 26 percent and victims of massacres decreased by 38 percent in 2003.

Although U.S. assistance to the Government of Colombia has led to meaningful signs of success under the strong leadership of President Alvaro Uribe, obstacles do remain. Complete realization of U.S. policy goals requires a concerted Colombian strategy and effort sustained by continuous U.S. assistance. Witnesses at the hearing will provide an update on the current status of U.S.-Colombian programs, progress that has been made in recent years, and an assessment of remaining challenges in the war against narcoterrorism.

WITNESSES

John P. Walters, Director, Office of National Drug Control Policy

Ambassador Luis Alberto Moreno, Ambassador to the U.S., Republic of Colombia

Roger F. Noriega, Assistant Secretary for Western Hemisphere Affairs, Department of State

Robert B. Charles, Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, Department of State

Thomas W. O'Connell, Assistant Secretary for Special Operations and Low-intensity Conflict, Department of Defense

General T. James Hill, Commander, U.S. Southern Command

Karen P. Tandy, Administrator, Drug Enforcement Administration

Mr. Carlos Ploter, former Political Commandante, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC)

Dr. Marc W. Chernick, Visiting Associate Professor, Center for Latin American Studies, School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University (Minority Witness)

Mr. Adam Isacson, Director of Programs, Center for International Policy (Minority Witness)

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